

# ***U.S. Small Business Administration's Business Information Centers***

## ***What Are They and Where Are They?***

The U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) Business Information Centers (BICs) provide a one-stop location where current and future small business owners can receive assistance and advice. BICs combine the latest computer technology, hardware and software, an extensive small business reference library of hard copy books and publications and current management video tapes to help entrepreneurs plan their business, expand an existing business or venture into new business areas. The use of software for a variety of business applications offers clients of all types a means for addressing diverse needs. Although most BICs are stand-alone centers in Empowerment Zones, BICs are the core element of the "One-Stop-Capital Shops (OSCS)."

In addition to the self-help hardware, software and reference materials, BICs have on-site counseling provided by the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). These former business men and women lend their expertise and knowledge to assist clients with problems and issues confronting those starting, managing and growing a small business.

Counseling provides the one-on-one interaction which leads the small business owners to develop personalized plans of action leading to the right choices for their businesses. Some BICs also have established linkages with Small Business Development Centers and together they offer not only general, but specialized, counseling and training.

Individuals who are in business or are interested in starting a business can use the BIC as often as they wish at no charge. For the prospective business owner, visits to the BIC may be frequent, as they do the basic research necessary to reach the decision to start their business. Existing business owners may use the BIC less frequently, but will find many resources aimed at business growth.

Each BIC adds new materials and resources throughout the year as they become aware of special needs in their small business community. The BICs are also used to inform the public about new initiatives and programs offered by the SBA and to reach business owners who might not otherwise take advantage of SBA's programs and services. Every BIC has access to *SBA Online*, the agency's national electronic bulletin board and most have access to the Internet.

As of November 1999, more than 60 BICs are operating in Jonesboro AR; Los Angeles, San Diego, Chula Vista, San Francisco CA; Denver CO; Hartford and Norwich CT; Wilmington DE; Washington DC; Miami FL; Atlanta GA; Boise ID; Honolulu HI; Chicago IL; Louisville KY; Lewiston and Portland ME; Boston, Cape Cod, Lawrence, Lynn, Pittsfield, Worcester, Brockton and West Barnstable MA; Minneapolis MN; Kansas City MO; Helena and Billings MT; Omaha NE; Las Vegas NV; Nashua NH; Newark and Camden NJ; Albuquerque NM; Albany NY; Charlotte NC; Grand Forks ND; Cleveland OH; Oklahoma City OK; Warm Springs, Grand Ronde, Chiloquin and Portland OR; Santurce PR; Providence RI; Charleston SC; Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Yankton SD; El Paso, Ft. Worth and Houston TX; Salt Lake City UT; Randolph Center and Burlington VT; Seattle, Spokane and Richland, WA; Fairmont WV; Casper WY.

The following sites are planning installs in 2000: Anchorage AK; Phoenix AZ; Santa Ana, Fresno and San Jose CA; Jacksonville FL; Indianapolis IN; Cedar Rapids IA; Wichita KS; New

Orleans LA; Biloxi and Jackson MS; Kent State OH; Pittsburg PA; Memphis TN; Richmond VA; Vancouver and Everett WA; Martinsburg and Wheeling WV; Parkside (Kenosha) WI. To determine if a BIC will be opening in your area, call your local SBA district office or the Office of Business Initiatives at (202) 205-6665.

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